

administration had estimated, and agreed with us that it will have no burden whatever on the Medicare Trust Fund. It will not shorten the life of the Trust Fund, nor will it complicate in any way our attempts at the long-term reform of Medicare. We're talking about somewhere between three and four hundred thousand people that are just out there, that had health insurance and now don't have any, at a particularly vulnerable time in their lives. So I hope you will support that.

The second thing I'd like to ask for your support for involves a project that Hillary has worked very hard on to sort of leave some gifts for our country in the new millennium. The project motto is "Honoring our past, and imagining our future." Among other things, we're working with the Congress to get the funds necessary to save, for example, the Star-Spangled Banner, which is in terrible shape. We need to spend, believe it or not, \$13 million to restore the flag, and to make sure that the 200 years of lighting don't destroy the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and to try to get every community in the country to find those things in each community which are most important to their history and save them.

But we're also looking at the future. And perhaps the most important thing about the future-oriented nature of this project is the Research Fund for the 21st Century, which has a huge increase in research for all forms of scientific research and development but especially have the largest increase in funding for the NIH in history and doubling the funding for the National Cancer Institute.

We are on the verge of unlocking a number of medical mysteries, as you know. Last year, for example, we had the first sign of movement in the lower limbs of laboratory animals with severed spines. The human genome project is proceeding at a rapid pace, with implications

which still stagger the imagination. Again I say, we have the money to do this. We can do this within the balanced budget. And while there may not be time to resolve every issue I'd like to see resolved in this Congress, we should nail down now this Research Fund for the 21st Century. There has been terrific support in the Republican as well as in the Democratic caucuses. This has not been a partisan issue. It is just the question of getting the job done in the next 70 days.

So while you're here, let me say again, a big part of building America for the 21st century is building a healthier America and building an America where people feel secure with the health care they have, and they feel it has integrity. We need the Patients' Bill of Rights. We need action on the tobacco front. We need reform of Medicare, long term. We need to help these people that are falling between the gaps because they're not old enough yet. And we need to continue in an intensified way our commitment to research. Let us take the benefit of our prosperity and finally having a balanced budget and invest the kind of money in research that we know—we know—will ensure benefits beyond our wildest imagination.

We can do all this in the next 70 days, but to do it we'll have to do it together. I need your help. Your patients need your help. Your country will be richly rewarded if you can persuade the Congress to act in these areas.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the ballroom at the Sheraton Washington Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to the following American Medical Association officers: Dr. Percy Wootton, president; Dr. Nancy Dickey, president-elect; Dr. Thomas Reardon, chairman of the board; Dr. Randolph D. Smoak, Jr., vice chairman of the board; and Dr. Lynn E. Jensen, chief executive officer and interim vice president.

Remarks at Housatonic Community-Technical College in Bridgeport, Connecticut

March 10, 1998

Thank you very much. First of all, I think Pamela did a terrific job with her speech. And

secondly, when Anthony stood up, I thought to myself, in a few years Congressman Shays

will be retiring, and I—[laughter]—may be looking at his successor right there. He was great. [Laughter] I love it. Senator Dodd, you might want to hire him as a consultant this year. [Laughter]

Mr. Mayor, I'm delighted to be back in Bridgeport with you and Jennifer and the officials of the city government. I thank Senator Dodd and Congressman Shays and Representatives Barbara Kennelly and Rosa DeLauro for joining us today; Attorney General Blumenthal, Treasurer Paul Sylvester, Speaker Ritter and members of the legislature.

Like Senator Dodd, I want to extend my condolences on behalf of Hillary and myself to the families of the victims of the shooting incident in Newton, and our prayers are with them.

And like Senator Dodd, on a happier note, I want to congratulate Connecticut for getting both its teams into the NCAA. [Laughter] So did Arkansas. [Laughter] Thank goodness we don't have a contest anytime soon. And what Senator Dodd didn't say is that UCONN's men's team is actually playing in Washington this week. And so I think you all should keep score and see which Members of your congressional delegation show up to root the home team on. [Laughter]

I'm glad to be back in Bridgeport. I really like this community, and I have admired the courage with which the people here have struggled in the tough years and moved to move the community forward. I should tell you, whenever I come to a place you all notice that there are a few members of the press who come with me. [Laughter] And sometimes it seems that we're on opposite sides of the line, but you should know that one member of the press, Larry McQuillan, who works for Reuters News Service and is actually the president of the White House Press Corps this year, is from Bridgeport. He will write a totally biased, favorable story—[laughter]—about this wonderful college and child care program today, I can assure you.

I want to thank President Wertz for showing me around the school and the unbelievable art collection here, which you should be very proud of.

And I want to thank Marie Nulty for taking me through the wonderful preschool program. In the Early Childhood Lab School's parent handbook, there is the following quote: "A child is like a butterfly in the wind. Some can fly

higher than others, but each one flies the best it can. Each one is special. Each one is different. Each one is beautiful." After going through this child care center, it seems to me that that is a motto that every teacher I saw lived and worked by, and that every child I met was made to feel special every day.

The reason I came here today is twofold: First of all, because of the extraordinary leadership for children, and especially on the child care center issue—child care issue, of Senator Dodd, along with the Members of your House delegation who are here who have been terrific on this issue; and second, because what I see here today is what I believe every child in America needs, and it's important that we graphically demonstrate to the country that with so many parents in the work force or going back to school, there is a crying unmet need—which the mayor graphically and numerically demonstrated in his remarks just here in Bridgeport—all over the country for the kind of high quality child care that you offer here.

Today we have to make a commitment to extend that option to every family in America that needs it. I want to talk about what we in the Federal Government can do on our own to improve child care at Federal centers, but most importantly I want to talk about what Congress should do in the next 70 days to help every working family give their children the kind of child care we see here.

As has been said already, these are good times for America. We have 15 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years, the lowest inflation rate in 30 years, the highest homeownership rate in history, the lowest welfare rolls in 27 years, the lowest crime rate in 24 years. And I'm proud of it. These numbers only matter insofar as they reflect differences in the lives of ordinary Americans, a different life story that can be told. The reason I was proud to be introduced by Pamela Price is that she embodies the changing story of America over the last 5 years, and that's what we want for every American who's willing to work for it.

In last year's historic balanced budget agreement we provided a child care tax credit of \$500 per child for families; expanded health care coverage to 5 million more children in lower income working families who don't have access to it now; and perhaps most important, have virtually opened the doors of college to all Americans. For example—and you can compare

it, what it means here at Housatonic—in the last years we have added 300,000 work-study slots, hundreds of thousands of more scholarships; we've made the interest on student loans tax deductible; 100,000 young people have worked their way through college or earned money for college by serving in AmeriCorps in community service projects. You can now save for a college education in an IRA and withdraw from the IRA tax-free if the money is used for a college education. But most important, now there is a \$1,500 tax credit—that's not a deduction, a credit—a reduction of your tax bill for the first 2 years of college, and a lifetime learning credit that is substantial but not quite that large for junior and senior years, for job training programs, for graduate schools. I think we can really say that insofar as community-based institutions like this are concerned, we have opened the doors of college to all Americans who are willing to work for it. And that is a profoundly important achievement for our country.

Senator Dodd talked about what the Family and Medical Leave Act means. The American dream is now in reach for more and more families, and that is a very, very good thing. But as you heard Pamela say, what made all this work for her as she was struggling to put her life on track was knowing that her child would be in a safe, healthy, positive child care environment. And if we really want to open the doors of opportunity to all Americans, we not only have to finish our agenda of bringing job opportunities and business opportunities into every neighborhood and every city like Bridgeport in America, we have to make sure that if the jobs and the educational opportunities are open, the parents can actually go without having to worry that they're neglecting their children.

We can never have a country that is fully successful if millions of people every day get up and look forward to a day in which they are terrified that they will have to make a choice between being a responsible parent and a good worker or a good student. If we have to choose, we lose. Society has no more important work than raising children. If everyone did that successfully, I think we would all agree we'd have less than half the problems we have today.

On the other hand, this economic boom we celebrate was fueled by having nearly two-thirds of the American adults in the work force, the highest percentage of people in the work force

in history. That's how you get a low unemployment rate. Well, by definition, a lot of those folks are parents with children who have to be supervised and nourished and supported and helped.

So when you think about this child care issue, if you look at it the way I do, not just as President but as a parent and as someone who's worked all his life, I say to myself, we cannot have a country that asks people to make a choice between succeeding at home and succeeding at work, and insofar as we have to choose, we lose. When we know we can succeed at home and at work because of an effective child care center, every American wins. The country wins. We're stronger in the 21st century; our families are stronger; our economies are stronger; they reinforce each other. That's really what this child care issue is all about.

Now, we've worked hard on this for the last 5 years. We've helped a million more parents to pay—or the parents of a million more children to pay for child care. But obviously—remember the mayor's numbers for Bridgeport—there is a huge amount of work to be done here. And today we're releasing a report that confirms the overwhelming need still existing all across America. The report shows that States have come up with a lot of innovative ideas, and the Congress allocated \$4 billion more to States for child care as a part of welfare reform. But even with all that, it is clear that the resources are simply not there yet to meet the needs of all the families in America. States have been forced to turn away literally thousands upon thousands of low-income families.

In Connecticut, the State Child Care Bureau has to restrict its aid to families on welfare or teen parents in high school. They've actually stopped taking applications from families that are so-called "working poor" altogether.

So here we are at a time of unprecedented prosperity, when people at the lower end of the income scale are finally beginning to get pay raises and have some security in their jobs, but we know they can't afford quality child care without help. So here we are at a time—the best of times for our country, and yet we still have millions of people getting up every day going to work worrying about their children. We are forcing them to make choices that no family should have to make, that no country should tolerate, and that we will pay for down the road sooner or later. So what we want to

do is pay for it now, the right way, and have a good, positive environment.

Now, let me say some of the things that I intend to do with the Federal child care centers. We care—the Federal Government cares in its child care centers for some 215,000 children, quite a few. We want them to be a model for the Nation. Today I'm going to direct my Cabinet to do four things:

First, to make all the centers fully accredited by the year 2000. Now, what does that mean in terms of quality of facilities, training for workers, and child-to-staff ratios? Today, believe it or not, 76 percent of our military child care centers are already accredited, but only 35 percent of our nonmilitary centers are. We'll make both categories 100 percent in the next 700 days.

Second, we have to make sure that all the centers conduct thorough background checks on workers. In too many States there is no checking to see if the people we trust with our children are even trustworthy in the eyes of the law. Connecticut is one of the few States that actually does require a criminal background check of child care workers. Every State should do it, and the Federal Government should certainly do it.

Third, we have to make sure that all Federal workers know about all their child care benefits and options in the first place.

And finally, we're going to do more work with the private sector to make Federal child care better and more affordable. If we do all that, there will still be millions of kids out there and their parents who need help. In the balanced budget I have presented to Congress for this year, I've proposed a comprehensive and responsible plan to strengthen child care. There will be other proposals to do the same thing.

Now, Congress is only going to meet about 70 more days this year. I know you say, "Well, it's only March," but anyway that's—in Washington, Congress plans to only sit about 70 more days. Now, there is enormous support, I believe, among people in both parties in our country and, I believe, among people in both parties in the Congress for taking action on child care. I have a plan, and there are others, which would double the number of children receiving child care subsidies, at a million or more new kids, give tax cuts to businesses which provide child care, expand child care tax credits to 3 million working families, and improve the standards of

child care centers and provide more funds to train—adequately train—workers in child care centers.

Now, we're not talking about peanuts here. Let me tell you what we're talking about. The tax credits that we will offer, if Congress would pass them, would mean that a family of four living on up to \$35,000 a year that has high child care bills would not pay any Federal income tax. That would be a terrific incentive to help working families afford quality child care. And for lower income working families who don't owe any Federal income tax anyway, if we increase the block grant going to the States, it goes to subsidized care for lower income working families, plus the money that we have given the States for people moving from welfare to work—we will be able to make a huge dent in this problem.

If Congress acts, we can make child care safer as well as more affordable. We can even give scholarships under our plan to talented caregivers to train more people. We also can expand after-school programs to keep 500,000 more kids, when they get a little older, off our streets and out of trouble after school. I think that's very important. As I said, there are only 70 days left. There are always, with something this big, some controversy around the edges of the issue. But all these things can be resolved if the Congress will make up its mind to act. Because these 70 days of meetings where they can vote will be spread over most of the year. There's still time for committee meetings, for staff to do their work, for all that kind of stuff to happen. We can do this. We do not need to wait another year just because this is an election year to pass this. We need to do this now.

The other thing I want to say that's related to this, is that Congress must pass comprehensive tobacco legislation to reduce teen smoking and raise the price of cigarettes by up to a dollar and a half a pack, impose strong penalties on companies that continue to advertise to children, and give the FDA full authority to regulate tobacco products and children's access to them. The revenues we raise from the tobacco company would help to make a partial contribution to the child care plan that I have proposed as well.

Again I say, there's some controversy—there's some issues that have to be resolved in this tobacco settlement, to get the legislation. But I want to, again, graphically illustrate—I just

watched all those little kids in that room, those two rooms, these beautiful children—every single day, even though it is illegal in every State in America, 3,000 more children begin to smoke; 1,000 of those 3,000 children will die sooner because of that decision. Hardly anybody becomes a chronic, lifetime smoker who does not start in their teenage years.

So I know there are only 70 days left, and I know this is a big bill. But I know that there are Democrats and Republicans in substantial numbers who want to do this. We should not let the calendar get in the way of the urgent need for action. We can pass the child care reforms, and we can fund them. And we can pass the tobacco legislation, and we must. Just think about it: 1,000 kids every day that wants—just like all these children did in here. Just think about it, every single day. There is no need to wait. There is no excuse for waiting. The time to act is now.

I leave you with this thought. I'm glad you clapped when I said these are good times for America. And you ought to be proud of yourselves, because the whole country helped to create these good times. And the efforts that we make in different areas, from the economy to crime to welfare reform to early childhood to health and education, they all reinforce each other. But sometimes when times are good and people clap and they feel good, they relax. I tell you, when times are good but challenges are large and the future is coming at you like a fast train down a track—and that's how the 21st century is coming at you, with things chang-

ing more rapidly than ever before—then an obligation is imposed to use the good times to act, not to relax.

So I say to all of you, the Members of Congress who are here are ready to act, so give them all a pat on the back, but do everything you can to send a clear and unambiguous signal that you do not want the election year to be a relaxation year; you want it to be a legislating year for the children of this country to make them stronger in the new century. After all, it's only 700 days away. Let's spend 70 days to make sure that in 700 days we'll have the healthiest, strongest children in the history of our Nation.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. in the Performing Arts Building. In his remarks, he referred to Pamela A. Price, a student with a young daughter in the college's child care program, who introduced the President, and her teenage son, Anthony; Mayor Joseph P. Ganim of Bridgeport, and his wife, Jennifer; State Attorney General Richard Blumenthal; State Treasurer Paul Sylvester; Thomas D. Ritter, speaker, Connecticut House of Representatives; Janis M. Wertz, president, Housatonic Community-Technical College; and Marie Nulty, director, Early Childhood Laboratory School. The President also referred to a March 6 incident in which a Connecticut State Lottery employee killed four coworkers at the headquarters building in Newington before killing himself.

Memorandum on Steps To Improve Federally Sponsored Child Care

March 10, 1998

*Memorandum for the Heads of Executive
Departments and Agencies*

Subject: Steps to Improve Federally Sponsored
Child Care

Now more than ever, America's working parents are struggling to balance their obligations to be good workers—and their more important obligations to be good parents. By choice or by financial necessity, millions of Americans rely on child care to care for their children for part

of each day. Parents deserve to know that their children are safe and nurtured in child care.

One of my highest priorities is to make child care better, safer, and more affordable. That is why my balanced budget includes the most significant investment in child care in our Nation's history and proposes specific measures to improve child care quality.

As a supplier of child care and as an employer that must recruit and retain a strong workforce, the Federal Government should lead the way